

## Abstract Poster:

# Gestures as an interface of performers' intentionality: a case study of Western Embodiment of Karnatic Music in piano performance

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## Background

Music performance has a strong corporeal dimension, involving different types of gestures (technical gestures, expressive gestures, etc.) that performers employ to transform a written score into live music (Leman 2007). This transformation is based on the musical intentions that arise from the performers' personal interpretation of the composition as an outcome of their artistic praxis, which leads to decisions on how to play the music in terms of its structure, articulation of the phrases, dynamics, timber and the necessary motor strategies to realize these decisions in the sounding music.

## Aims

This research wants to investigate musical gestures as an interface of performers' intentionality, i.e. an outcome of the artistic praxis and the process of embodiment, in the light of the recent theories on *enactment* and *embodied music cognition* (Leman 2016). For this reason, we considered a case study based on the interpretation of a piece that includes the acquisition and embodiment of musical knowledge quite new to the performer in order to map the modifications in the corporeal engagement from an intuitive approach to a conscious approach. The composition chosen was a contemporary piano piece based on a non-western music tradition: the Karnatic modes from South India.

## Method

To assist the performer in (re)framing the phases of her artistic process, a methodology, called *performer based analysis method* (Caruso et al 2016), was developed to establish also the procedures of a *performative experiment* where the performance of the 8<sup>th</sup> cycle from the 72 *Etudes Karnatiques pour piano* by Jacques Charpentier (b.1933) was taken as a case study. The performative experiment required a period of preparation, which concerns the performer/researcher's artistic praxis (to embody the piece) and the self-observation of a video recording archive of her performances in order to map and describe the artistic praxis. The pianist conducted a musicological research on the influence of Indian music in the French contemporary piano repertoire to enrich specifically her current competences in Karnatic Music and had a collaborative three years practice with the composer and with two experts in Karnatic music, a singer and a dancer (see the Re-Orient project: <http://re-orient.wixsite.com/indiandream>). A retrospective *thinking-aloud procedure* (Van den Haak & De Jong, 2003) was used during the experiment to allow the performer in rendering explicit and systematic the artistic reflections. The experiment was recorded by a video camera, a microphone and the Motion Capture System.

## Results

To catch the development between the initial intuitive performance and the final embodied performance, two recordings of one fragment from the piece played with these two different approaches (intuitive and conscious) were compared. The analysis of these fragments was based on an alignment between qualitative data acquired through subjective descriptions - based on a *performance model* and a *score annotation* - and quantitative data (objective measurements) produced by the audio-video and motion capture recordings. The qualitative and quantitative data (audio and video) were processed through the ELAN software. Gestural similarities and differences between the intuitive and conscious versions were detected by comparing the kinematic and audio measurements (quantitative data) with the performer's subjective annotations (qualitative data) concerning the motor strategies and the interpretative cues. The results show a different corporeal engagement of the pianist related to the different intentions through a parallel configuration of these two different subjective and objective layers.

## Conclusions

The actual investigation wants to present musical gestures as vehicles of idiosyncratic intentions and expressions by linking performers' corporeal engagement to the embodiment of their interpretation in order to better understand the connection between musical intentions, goal actions and sound. The role of the technology-mediated approach (third-person's perspective) gives the opportunity to study, as in a mirror-like tool, some aspects, which imply the performer's subjective involvement (first-person's perspective). This method provides specifically to musicians/researchers an easier access to music performance analysis. Furthermore, with the implementation of a transdisciplinary and collaborative practice (with the composer, the Indians singer and dancer) plus the aid of technology with the motion and audio analysis, the actual study adds an alternative perspective concerning the exploration and the design of new paths within the field of artistic research.

## Keywords

Musical Gestures – Embodied Music Cognition - Music Performance – Music Intentions and Expressivity – Music Interpretation

## REFERENCES

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